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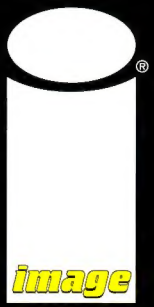
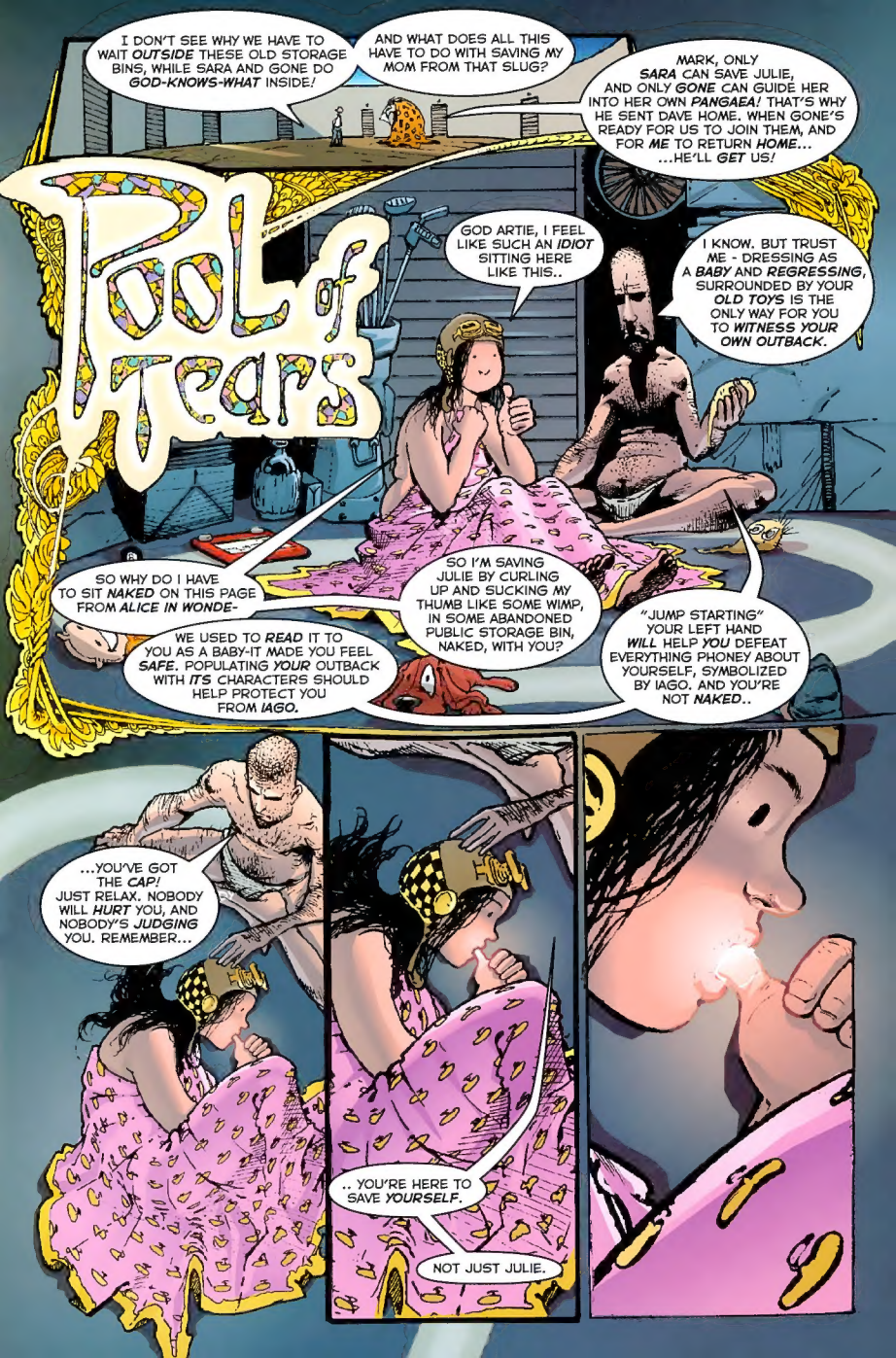
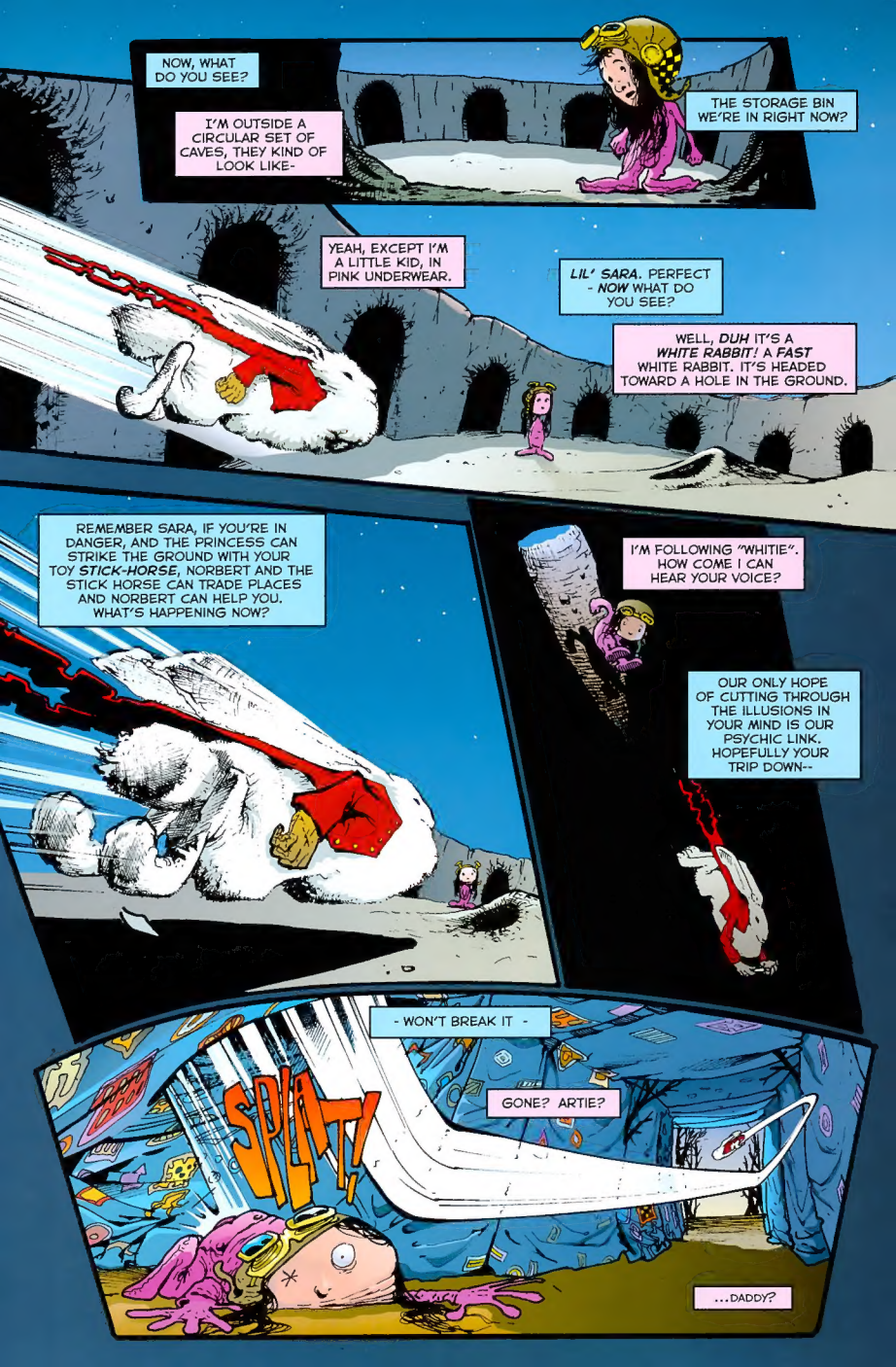
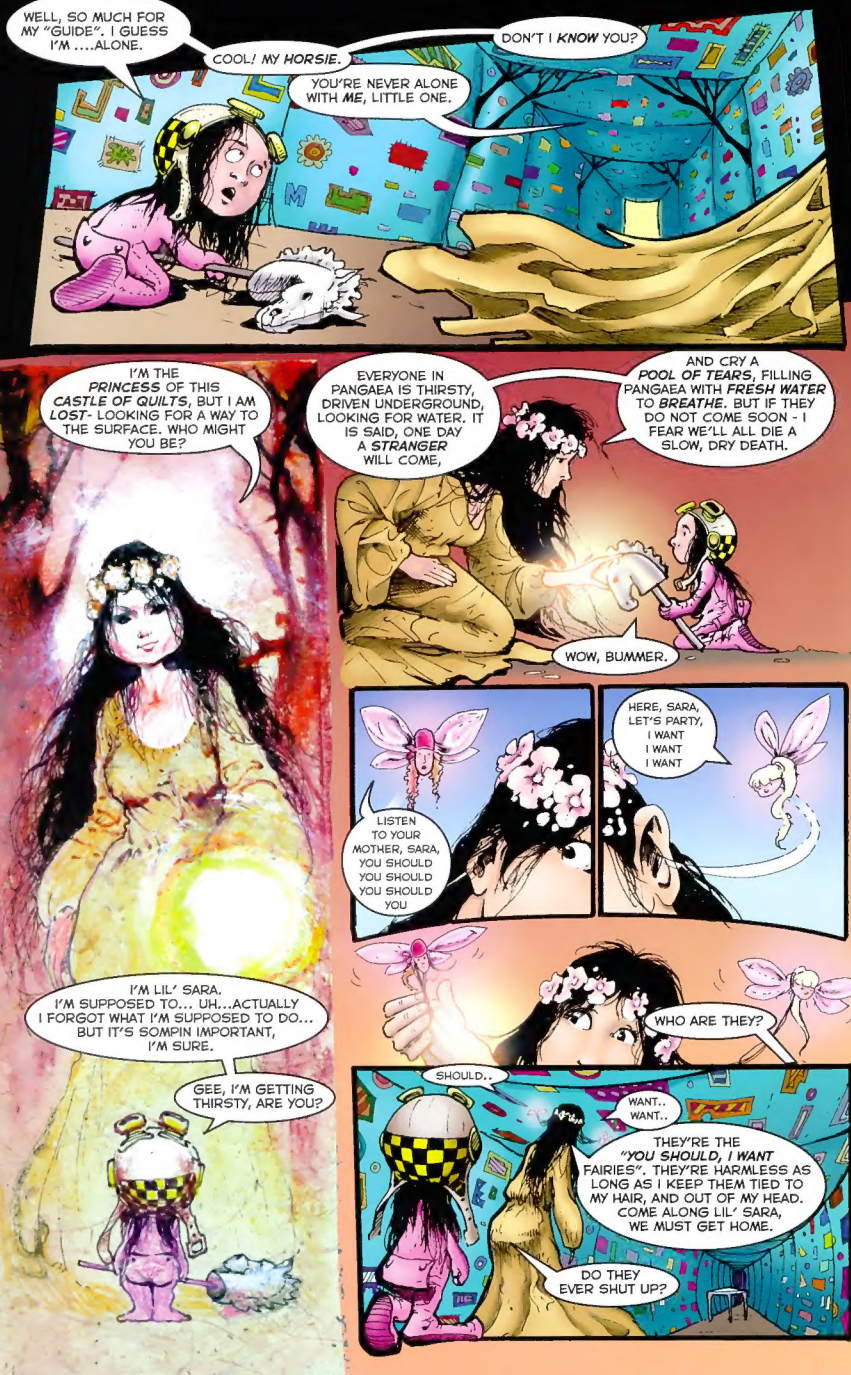
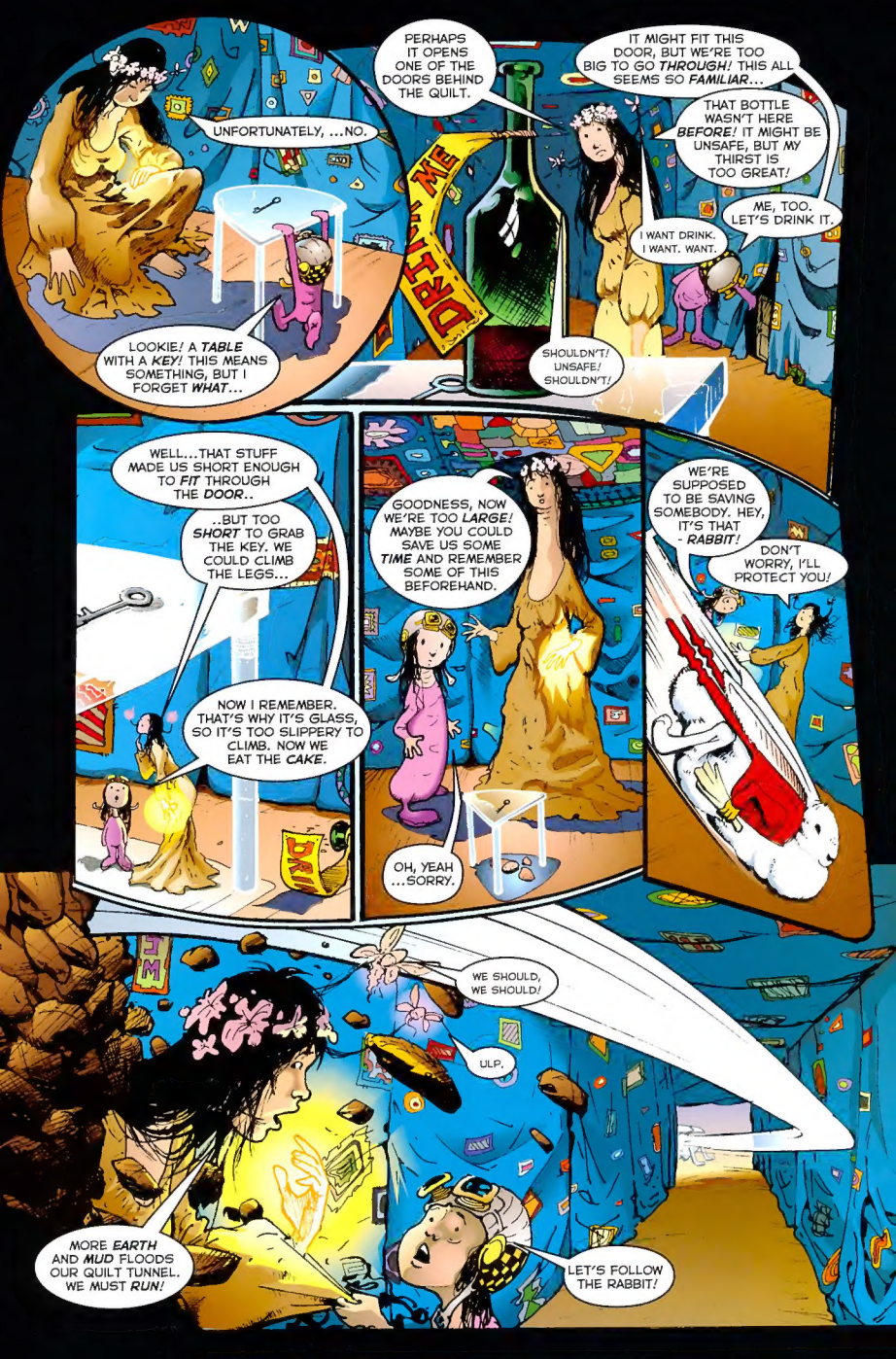
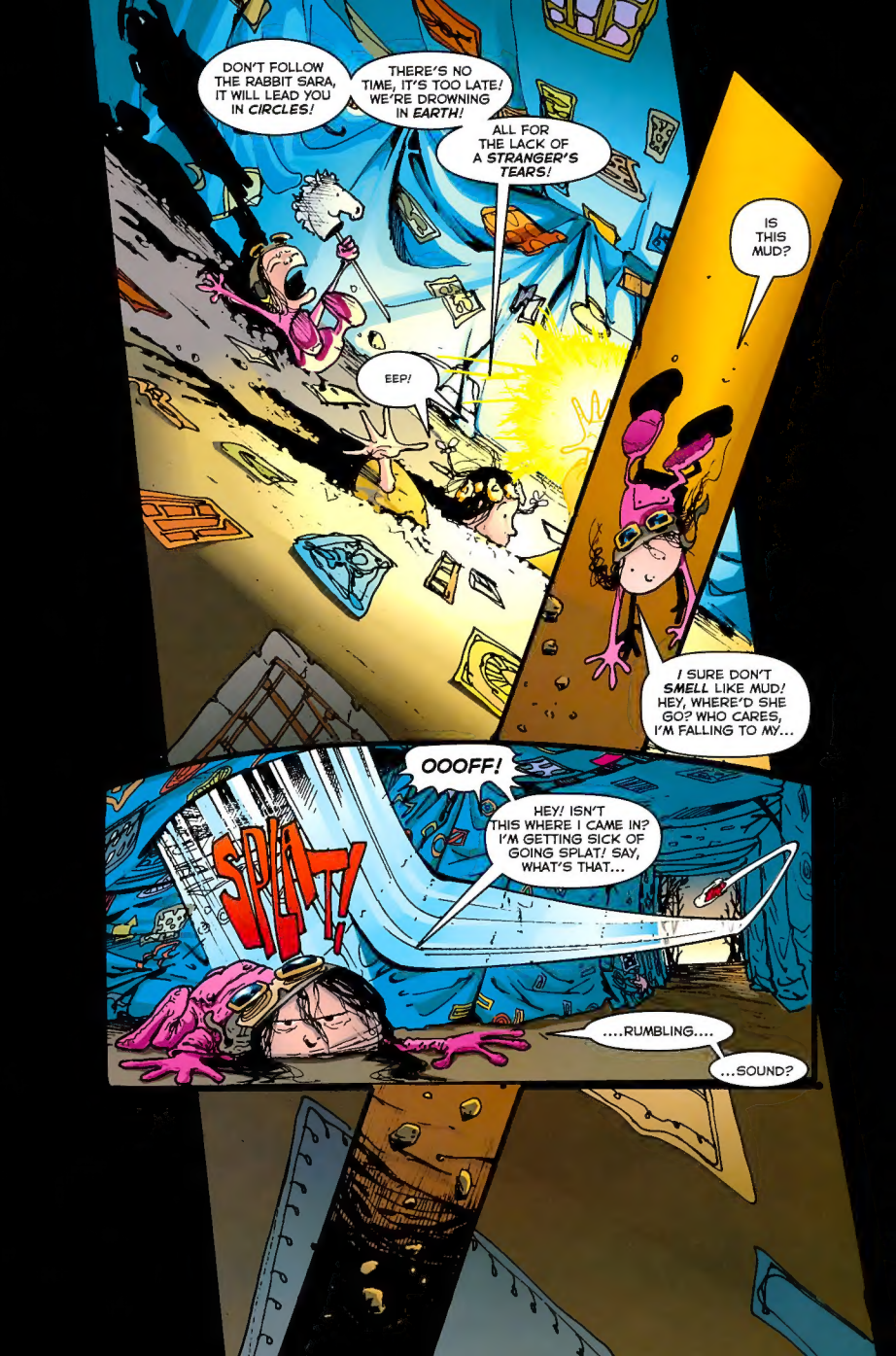



I DON'T SEE WHY WE HAVE TO WAIT OUTSIDE THESE OLD STORAGE BINS, WHILE SARA AND GONE DO GOD-KNOWS-WHAT INSIDE!
AND WHAT DOES ALL THIS HAVE TO DO WITH SAVING MY MOM FROM THAT SLUG?
MARK, ONLY SARA CAN SAVE JULIE, AND ONLY GONE CAN GUIDE HER INTO HER OWN PANGAEA! THAT'S WHY HE SENT DAVE HOME. WHEN GONE'S READY FOR US TO JOIN THEM, AND FOR ME TO RETURN HOME... ...HE'LL GET US!
Pool of Tears
GOD ARTIE, I FEEL LIKE SUCH AN IDIOT SITTING HERE LIKE THIS..
I KNOW. BUT TRUST ME - DRESSING AS A BABY AND REGRESSING, SURROUNDED BY YOUR OLD TOYS IS THE ONLY WAY FOR YOU TO WITNESS YOUR OWN OUTBACK.
SO WHY DO I HAVE TO SIT NAKED ON THIS PAGE FROM ALICE IN WONDE-
SO I'M SAVING JULIE BY CURLING UP AND SUCKING MY THUMB LIKE SOME WIMP, IN SOME ABANDONED PUBLIC STORAGE BIN, NAKED, WITH YOU?
WE USED TO READ IT TO YOU AS A BABY-IT MADE YOU FEEL SAFE. POPULATING YOUR OUTBACK WITH ITS CHARACTERS SHOULD HELP PROTECT YOU FROM IAGO.
"JUMP STARTING" YOUR LEFT HAND WILL HELP YOU DEFEAT EVERYTHING PHONEY ABOUT YOURSELF, SYMBOLIZED BY IAGO. AND YOU'RE NOT NAKED..
...YOU'VE GOT THE CAP! JUST RELAX. NOBODY WILL HURT YOU, AND NOBODY'S JUDGING YOU. REMEMBER...
.. YOU'RE HERE TO SAVE YOURSELF.
NOT JUST JULIE.

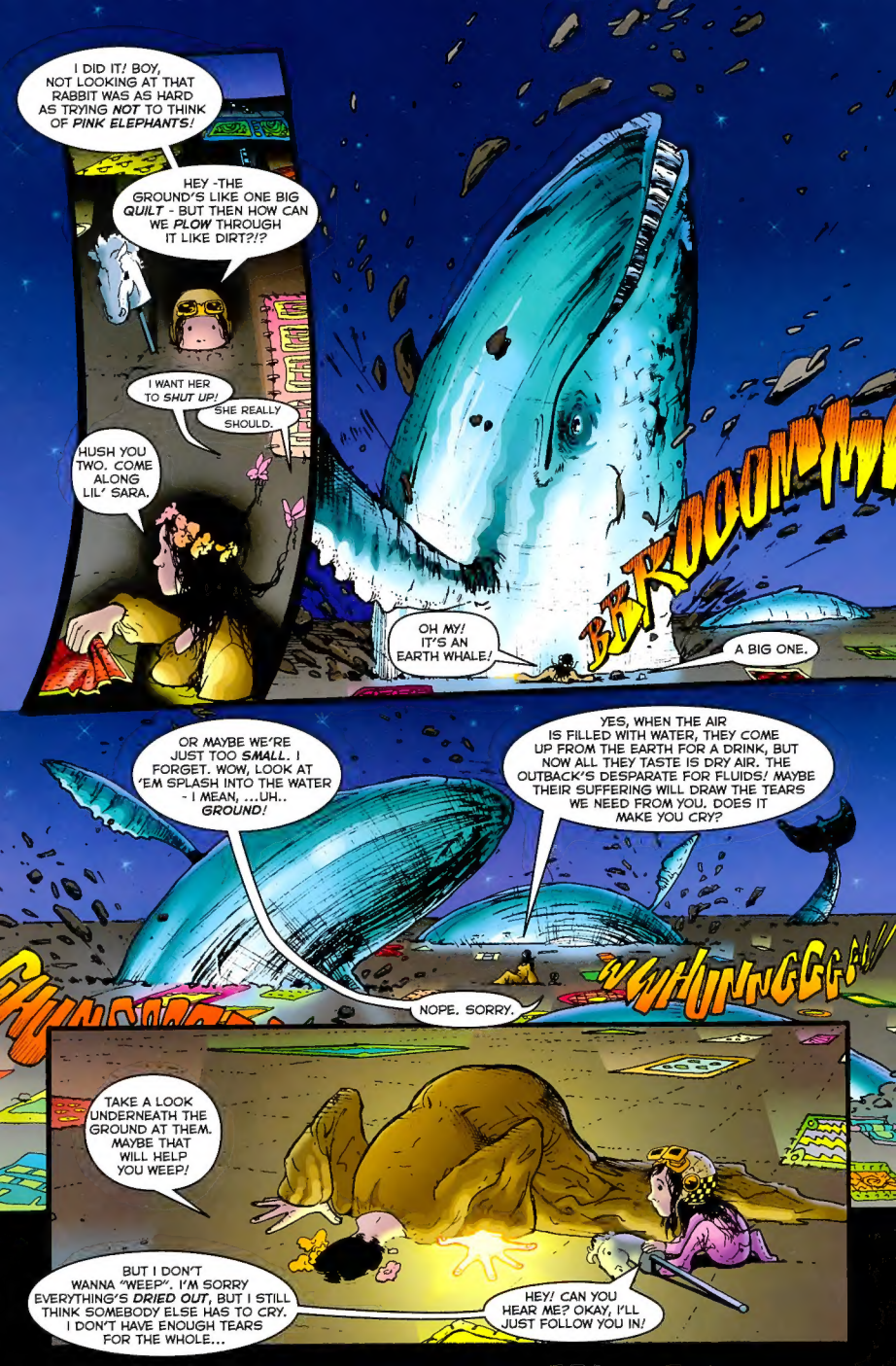

NOW, WHAT DO YOU SEE?
I'M OUTSIDE A CIRCULAR SET OF CAVES, THEY KIND OF LOOK LIKE-
THE STORAGE BIN WE'RE IN RIGHT NOW?
YEAH, EXCEPT I'M A LITTLE KID, IN PINK UNDERWEAR.
LIL' SARA. PERFECT - NOW WHAT DO YOU SEE?
WELL, DUH IT'S A WHITE RABBIT! A FAST WHITE RABBIT. IT'S HEADED TOWARD A HOLE IN THE GROUND.
REMEMBER SARA, IF YOU'RE IN DANGER, AND THE PRINCESS CAN STRIKE THE GROUND WITH YOUR TOY STICK-HORSE, NORBERT AND THE STICK HORSE CAN TRADE PLACES AND NORBERT CAN HELP YOU. WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?
I'M FOLLOWING "WHITIE". HOW COME I CAN HEAR YOUR VOICE?
OUR ONLY HOPE OF CUTTING THROUGH THE ILLUSIONS IN YOUR MIND IS OUR PSYCHIC LINK. HOPEFULLY YOUR TRIP DOWN--
- WON'T BREAK IT -
SPLAT!
GONE? ARTIE?
...DADDY?

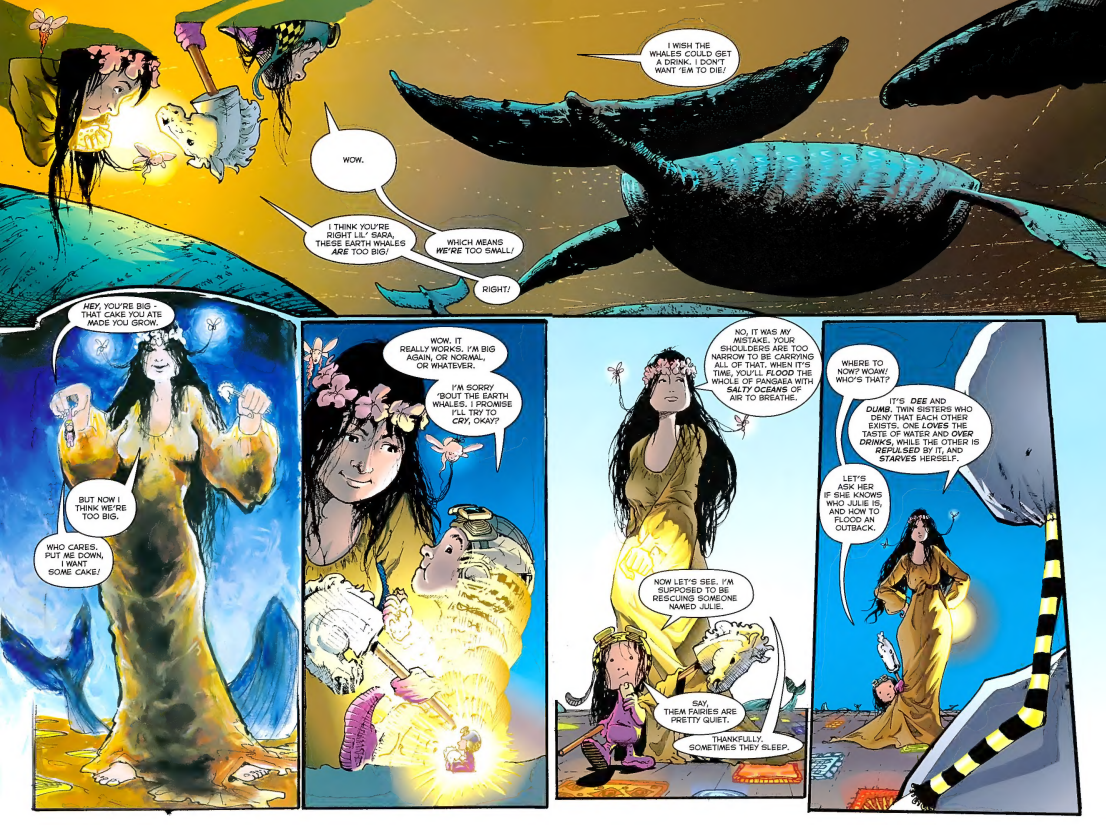

WELL, SO MUCH FOR MY "GUIDE". I GUESS I'M ....ALONE.
COOL! MY HORSIE.
DON'T I KNOW YOU?
YOU'RE NEVER ALONE WITH ME, LITTLE ONE.
I'M THE PRINCESS OF THIS CASTLE OF QUILTS, BUT I AM LOST- LOOKING FOR A WAY TO THE SURFACE. WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
EVERYONE IN PANGAEA IS THIRSTY, DRIVEN UNDERGROUND, LOOKING FOR WATER. IT IS SAID, ONE DAY A STRANGER WILL COME,
AND CRY A POOL OF TEARS, FILLING PANGAEA WITH FRESH WATER TO BREATHE. BUT IF THEY DO NOT COME SOON - I FEAR WE'LL ALL DIE A SLOW, DRY DEATH.
WOW, BUMMER.
LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER, SARA, YOU SHOULD YOU SHOULD YOU SHOULD YOU
HERE, SARA, LET'S PARTY, I WANT I WANT I WANT
I'M LIL' SARA. I'M SUPPOSED TO... UH...ACTUALLY I FORGOT WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO... BUT IT'S SOMPIN IMPORTANT, I'M SURE.
GEE, I'M GETTING THIRSTY, ARE YOU?
WHO ARE THEY?
SHOULD..
WANT.. WANT..
THEY'RE THE "YOU SHOULD, I WANT FAIRIES". THEY'RE HARMLESS AS LONG AS I KEEP THEM TIED TO MY HAIR, AND OUT OF MY HEAD. COME ALONG LIL' SARA, WE MUST GET HOME.
DO THEY EVER SHUT UP?

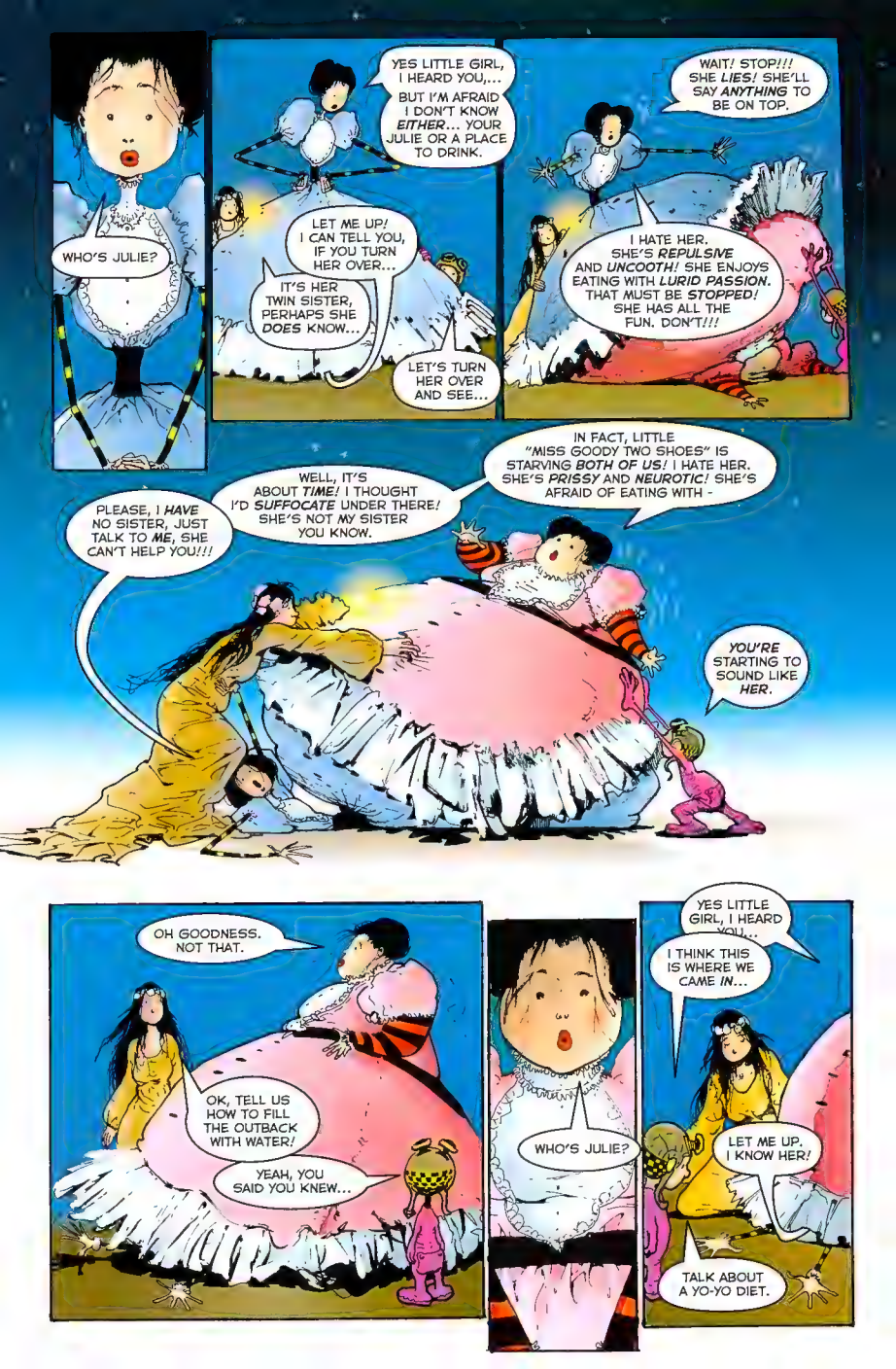

UNFORTUNATELY, ...NO.
LOOKIE! A TABLE WITH A KEY! THIS MEANS SOMETHING, BUT I FORGET WHAT...
PERHAPS IT OPENS ONE OF THE DOORS BEHIND THE QUILT.
DRINK ME
SHOULDN'T! UNSAFE! SHOULDN'T!
IT MIGHT FIT THIS DOOR, BUT WE'RE TOO BIG TO GO THROUGH! THIS ALL SEEMS SO FAMILIAR...
THAT BOTTLE WASN'T HERE BEFORE! IT MIGHT BE UNSAFE, BUT MY THIRST IS TOO GREAT!
I WANT DRINK. I WANT. WANT.
ME, TOO. LET'S DRINK IT.
WELL...THAT STUFF MADE US SHORT ENOUGH TO FIT THROUGH THE DOOR..
..BUT TOO SHORT TO GRAB THE KEY. WE COULD CLIMB THE LEGS...
NOW I REMEMBER. THAT'S WHY IT'S GLASS, SO IT'S TOO SLIPPERY TO CLIMB. NOW WE EAT THE CAKE.
EAT ME
GOODNESS, NOW WE'RE TOO LARGE! MAYBE YOU COULD SAVE US SOME TIME AND REMEMBER SOME OF THIS BEFOREHAND.
OH, YEAH ...SORRY.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SAVING SOMEBODY. HEY, IT'S THAT - RABBIT!
DON'T WORRY, I'LL PROTECT YOU!
EAT ME
WE SHOULD, WE SHOULD!
ULP.
MORE EARTH AND MUD FLOODS OUR QUILT TUNNEL. WE MUST RUN!
LET'S FOLLOW THE RABBIT!


DON'T FOLLOW THE RABBIT SARA, IT WILL LEAD YOU IN CIRCLES!
THERE'S NO TIME, IT'S TOO LATE! WE'RE DROWNING IN EARTH!
ALL FOR THE LACK OF A STRANGER'S TEARS!
EEP!
IS THIS MUD?
I SURE DON'T SMELL LIKE MUD! HEY, WHERE'D SHE GO? WHO CARES, I'M FALLING TO MY...
OOOFF!
HEY! ISN'T THIS WHERE I CAME IN? I'M GETTING SICK OF GOING SPLAT! SAY, WHAT'S THAT...
SPLAT!
....RUMBLING....
...SOUND?

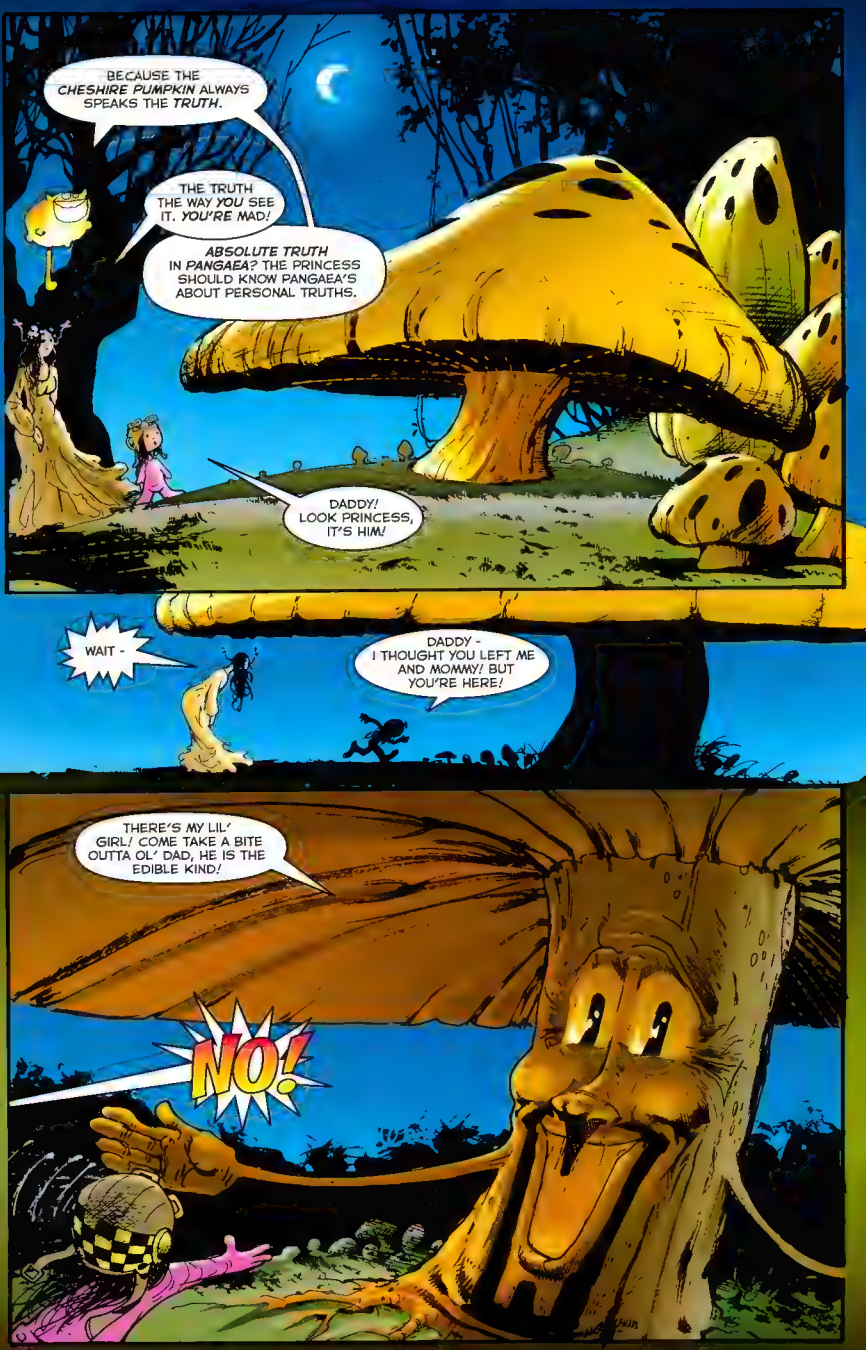
OH GREAT- THIS AGAIN!? MORE MUD???
IT'S COMING FROM YOU LIL' SARA. I BELIEVE YOU ARE THE STRANGER THE LEGEND SPOKE OF, ONLY INSTEAD OF TEARS, YOU'LL FILL THE OUTBACK WITH FOUL SMELLING MUD!
BUT I'M NOT CRYING MUD, PROMISE!
HUSH CHILD, THOUGH YOU MEAN NO HARM, YOU ARE THE SOURCE, I AM SURE. AT LEAST WE'VE REACHED THE SURFACE!
HEY, THE RABBIT WENT BACK DOWN -
DON'T LOOK!
@X#% HER, I WANNA LOOK!
SHOULDN'T LOOK! SHOULDN'T -
BUT IF YOU LOOK BACKWARDS YOU'LL BE....
..RIGHT WHERE YOU STARTED!
I'M VERY DISAPPOINTED IN YOU SARA, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LOOKED.
SHE CAN @X#% OFF! WHEN YOU GOTTA LOOK, YOU GOTTA LOOK! RIGHT?
THE "WANT FAIRIE'S" GOT A DIRTY MOUTH!
OH SARA, WHEN WILL YOU LEARN TO IGNORE THE FAIRIES, AND LOOK PAST THE RABBIT!?
I KNOW!
SAY, WHAT'S THAT RUMBLING?


I DID IT! BOY, NOT LOOKING AT THAT RABBIT WAS AS HARD AS TRYING NOT TO THINK OF PINK ELEPHANTS!
HEY -THE GROUND'S LIKE ONE BIG QUILT - BUT THEN HOW CAN WE PLOW THROUGH IT LIKE DIRT?!?
I WANT HER TO SHUT UP!
SHE REALLY SHOULD.
HUSH YOU TWO. COME ALONG LIL' SARA.
BBROOOM-MO
OH MY! IT'S AN EARTH WHALE!
A BIG ONE.
OR MAYBE WE'RE JUST TOO SMALL. I FORGET. WOW, LOOK AT 'EM SPLASH INTO THE WATER - I MEAN, ...UH.. GROUND!
YES, WHEN THE AIR IS FILLED WITH WATER, THEY COME UP FROM THE EARTH FOR A DRINK, BUT NOW ALL THEY TASTE IS DRY AIR. THE OUTBACK'S DESPARATE FOR FLUIDS! MAYBE THEIR SUFFERING WILL DRAW THE TEARS WE NEED FROM YOU. DOES IT MAKE YOU CRY?
NOPE. SORRY.
WWHUNNGGGG
TAKE A LOOK UNDERNEATH THE GROUND AT THEM. MAYBE THAT WILL HELP YOU WEEP!
BUT I DON'T WANNA "WEEP". I'M SORRY EVERYTHING'S DRIED OUT, BUT I STILL THINK SOMEBODY ELSE HAS TO CRY. I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TEARS FOR THE WHOLE...
HEY! CAN YOU HEAR ME? OKAY, I'LL JUST FOLLOW YOU IN!


I WISH THE WHALES COULD GET A DRINK. I DON'T WANT 'EM TO DIE!
WOW.
I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT LIL' SARA, THESE EARTH WHALES *ARE* TOO BIG!
WHICH MEANS *WE'RE* TOO SMALL!
RIGHT!
HEY, YOU'RE BIG - THAT CAKE YOU ATE MADE YOU GROW!
BUT NOW I THINK WE'RE TOO BIG.
WHO CARES. PUT ME DOWN, I WANT SOME CAKE!
WOW. IT REALLY WORKS. I'M BIG AGAIN, OR NORMAL, OR WHATEVER.
I'M *SORRY* 'BOUT THE EARTH WHALES. I PROMISE I'LL TRY TO *CRY*, OKAY?
NO, IT WAS *MY* MISTAKE. YOUR SHOULDERS ARE TOO NARROW TO BE CARRYING ALL OF THAT. WHEN IT'S TIME, YOU'LL *FLOOD* THE WHOLE OF PANGAEA WITH *SALTY OCEANS* OF AIR TO BREATHE.
NOW LET'S SEE. I'M SUPPOSED TO BE RESCUING SOMEONE NAMED JULIE.
SAY, THEM FAIRIES ARE PRETTY QUIET.
THANKFULLY, SOMETIMES THEY SLEEP.
WHERE TO NOW? WOAH! WHO'S THAT?
IT'S ***DEE*** AND ***DUMB***, TWIN SISTERS WHO DENY THAT EACH OTHER EXISTS. ONE *LOVES* THE TASTE OF WATER AND *OVER* ***DRINKS***, WHILE THE OTHER IS ***REPULSED*** BY IT, AND *STARVES* HERSELF.
LET'S ASK HER IF SHE KNOWS WHO JULIE IS, AND HOW TO FLOOD AN OUTBACK.


WHO'S JULIE?
YES LITTLE GIRL, I HEARD YOU,...
BUT I'M AFRAID I DON'T KNOW *EITHER*... YOUR JULIE OR A PLACE TO DRINK.
LET ME UP! I CAN TELL YOU, IF YOU TURN HER OVER...
IT'S HER TWIN SISTER, PERHAPS SHE *DOES* KNOW...
LET'S TURN HER OVER AND SEE...
WAIT! STOP!!! SHE *LIES!* SHE'LL SAY *ANYTHING* TO BE ON TOP.
I HATE HER. SHE'S *REPULSIVE* AND *UNCOOTH!* SHE ENJOYS EATING WITH *LURID PASSION.* THAT MUST BE *STOPPED!* SHE HAS ALL THE FUN. DON'T!!!
PLEASE, I *HAVE* NO SISTER, JUST TALK TO *ME,* SHE CAN'T HELP YOU!!!
WELL, IT'S ABOUT *TIME!* I THOUGHT I'D *SUFFOCATE* UNDER THERE! SHE'S NOT MY SISTER YOU KNOW.
IN FACT, LITTLE "MISS GOODY TWO SHOES" IS STARVING *BOTH OF US!* I HATE HER. SHE'S *PRISSY* AND *NEUROTIC!* SHE'S AFRAID OF EATING WITH -
YOU'RE STARTING TO SOUND LIKE *HER.*
OH GOODNESS. NOT THAT.
OK, TELL US HOW TO FILL THE OUTBACK WITH WATER!
YEAH, YOU SAID YOU KNEW...
WHO'S JULIE?
YES LITTLE GIRL, I HEARD YOU...
I THINK THIS IS WHERE WE CAME *IN*...
LET ME UP. I KNOW HER!
TALK ABOUT A YO-YO DIET.

THOSE ARE TWO WACKY GALS, I WISH THEY COULD GET ALONG.
I KNOW
I WONDER WHO "JULIE" IS? I THINK IT MATTERS...
UNFORTUNATELY, WE'RE NO CLOSER TO FILLING THE OUTBACK WITH *TEARS* THAN BEFORE!
MAYBE THIS DUDE KNOWS SOMPIN? I'D SWEAR I'VE SEEN HIM BEFORE.
WELL YOU COULD ASK THE *CATERPILLAR* OVER *THERE*, OR HUNDREDS OF THIRSTY *FAIRIES* EATING THE HORIZON OVER *THERE*, ASK EITHER! *BOTH* ARE MAD.
YOU *"PUMPKIN"*?
YES! THAT'S ME. I'M A "CHESHIRE PUMPKIN".
NO SILLY, I MEAN YOUR *NAME* - OH NEVER MIND.LISTEN...
WE'RE LOOKING FOR ENOUGH TEARS TO FILL THE OUTBACK WITH WATER.
MAD?
NUTS! INSANE! TOUCHED! EVERYONE *HERE* IS! THIRST HAS DRIVEN US MAD.
NOW I REMEMBER!
JULIE'S THIS CRAZY *WOMAN* I USED TO KNOW, AND A BIG SLUG'S GOT HER.
YOU MEAN *CATERPILLAR*! OVER *THERE*! HE'S VERY *SHY*, BUT IF YOU WANDER OVER, HE MIGHT EVENTUALLY *SHOW UP*, AND HELP YOU FIND YOUR FRIEND, OR *CRY* TRYING.
WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE A MAD *"PUMPKIN-CAT"*?


BECAUSE THE CHESHIRE PUMPKIN ALWAYS SPEAKS THE TRUTH.
THE TRUTH THE WAY YOU SEE IT. YOU'RE MAD!
ABSOLUTE TRUTH IN PANGAEA? THE PRINCESS SHOULD KNOW PANGAEA'S ABOUT PERSONAL TRUTHS.
DADDY! LOOK PRINCESS, IT'S HIM!
WAIT -
DADDY - I THOUGHT YOU LEFT ME AND MOMMY! BUT YOU'RE HERE!
THERE'S MY LIL' GIRL! COME TAKE A BITE OUTTA OL' DAD, HE IS THE EDIBLE KIND!
NO!

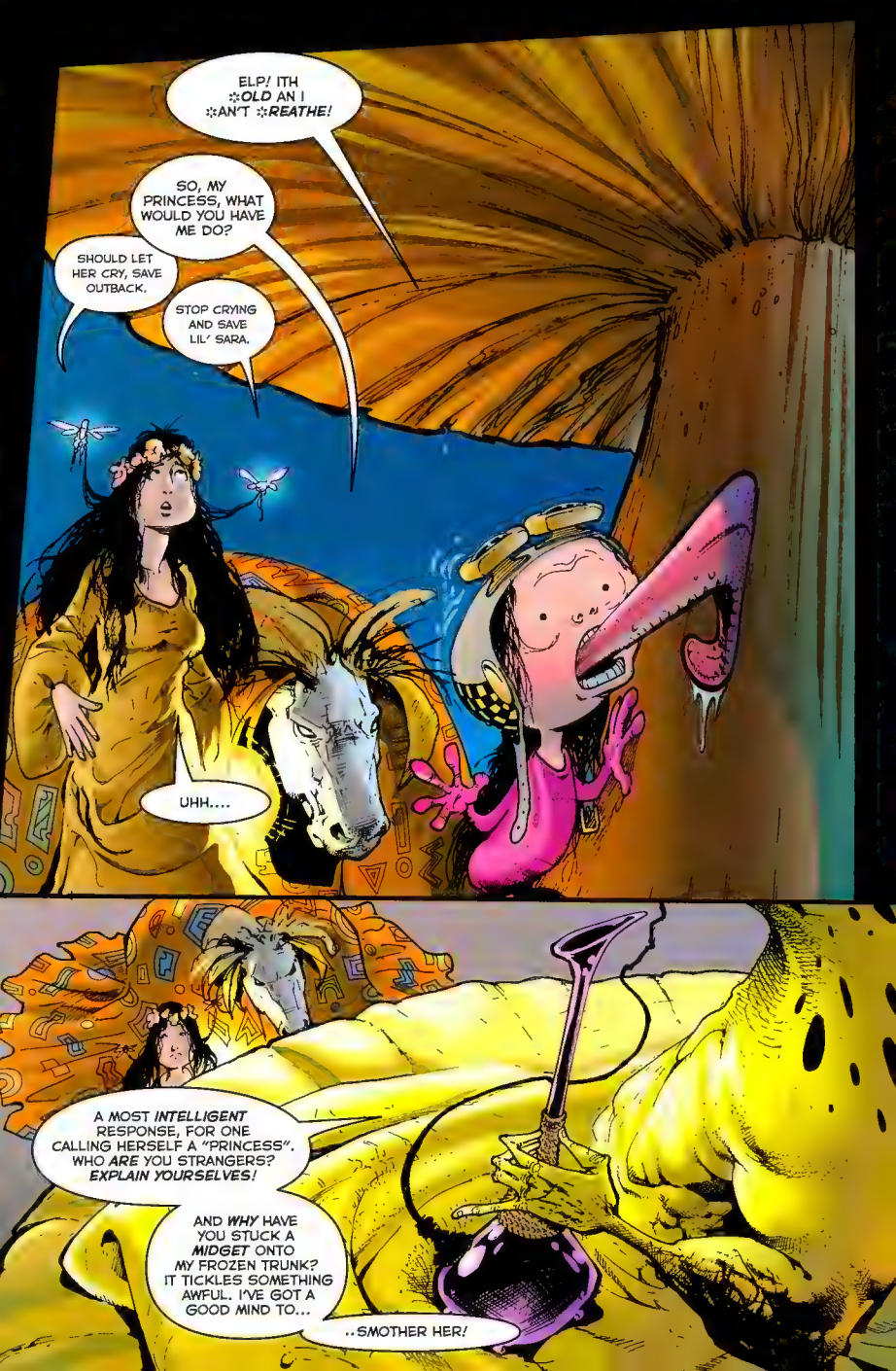
MUSTN'T EAT! POISON.
GO FOR IT, KID. PARTY DOWN.
IT'S NOT THE *REAL KING*, SARA, IT'S ONLY A *CATERPILLAR'S TRICK!*
BUT -BUT - HE'S A BIG WARM MUSHROOM.
LISTEN TO YOUR HEART SARA, DON'T BE FOOLED -
DADDY... CAN'T LOSE HIM..... I WON'T....
...DADDY
IT'S THE *CATERPILLAR* IN *DISGUISE.*
NO KIDDING. WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CLUE?
SO MUCH FOR A "CAT'S TRUTH".
DADDY, HELP.
COME BACK PRINCESS, DADDY *NEEDS* YOU!

THE CAT SPEAKS TRUE! THE GIRL MUST ORALLY *EAT THROUGH* AND *DIGEST* HER FOE, FOR ONLY BY *INTEGRATING* HER *REJECTED SELF* SHALL SHE BE *WHOLE*. TAKE A *BITE*, KID.
BUT IT'S *POISON!* SHE'LL DIE. WE MUST *DESTROY* EVIL.
LOOK. OUT THERE. THE FAIRIES EAT THE HORIZON, BUT SOMETHING'S *NOT BEING FED*. THE SISTERS DEE AND DUMB DRINK, BUT NO ONE'S *THIRST* IS *QUENCHED*.
DESPERATE WHALES DRINK *DRY EARTH*, POINTLESSLY! WHY?
BECAUSE.... *SUSTENANCE* CAN'T COME ONLY FROM *OUTSIDE* - IT MUST COME FROM EITHER *TEARS* OR *WOMB WATER* - *INSIDE*.
EXACTLY! THE *GIRL'S* TEARS.
SO EATING THE MUSHROOM WILL MAKE HER *CRY*?

NO, BUT SOMETHING ELSE WILL - WATCH!
SARA! BE CAREFUL.
C'MON SWEETIE...
DADDY!
JUST A LITTLE CLOSER...
I-LUUV-OO-TOO!
THERE! I GOT YOU. DADDY'S ALL THE WOMB YOU'LL EVER NEED!
I-WUV-OO-DADDY.
IF ANY HARM BEFALLS HER, TRUST ME...
...YOU WILL PAY.
I BELIEVE HER.
SO DO I.

TAKE SUSTENANCE FROM YOUR OL' PA. EAT YOUR SHADOW!
HEY, THIS MUSHROOM'S HARD AND COLD LIKE A POPSICLE. I CAN'T BITE IN!
CHOMP
OH DO - ⁘Y ⁘ONGUES ⁘UCK! ITH'S ⁘ROZEN!! ⁘ELP!
YOU KNOW WHY THE MUD SMELLS, DON'T YOU LIL' SARA? IT'S NOT MUD. IT'S COMING FROM YOU...
⁘ADDY WHAD ⁘OO YOU ⁘EAN?
YOU'RE SWIMMING IN A WORLD OF YOUR OWN - -
ENOUGH!!!
I'M SUMMONING FORTH THE HORSE SPIRIT - ...MAXX!
WITH A SINGLE STRIKE SHALL HE COME. HE SHALL REPLACE THIS HORSE TOTEM AND SAVE US ALL! RETURN GREAT PROTECTOR! YOUR PRINCESS CALLS...
WHACK

WHY DIDN'T HE COME?
I DUNNO.
NORBERT, YER UP. IN FACT YOU MISSED YOUR CUE.
YOU MEAN YOU CAN HEAR WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE SARA'S MIND?
AND DO NOTHING ABOUT IT - FRUSTRATING HUH? YOU'D BETTER WAIT OUT HERE, MARK.
OKAY.
OKAY, JUST STAND HERE, AND WITH ANY LUCK, THE PRINCESS WILL, ONCE MORE, CALL YOU...
MAXX, YOU ARE HOME AT LAST.
YES MY PRINCESS, I HAVE RETURNED TO HELP.
FOR I AM THE...
SHOOT. MY "LINK'S" BROKEN. HOPE EVERYTHING'S OKAY.


ELP! ITH ✲OLD AN I ✲AN'T ✲REATHE!
SO, MY PRINCESS, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?
SHOULD LET HER CRY, SAVE OUTBACK.
STOP CRYING AND SAVE LIL' SARA.
UHH....
A MOST INTELLIGENT RESPONSE, FOR ONE CALLING HERSELF A "PRINCESS". WHO ARE YOU STRANGERS? EXPLAIN YOURSELVES!
AND WHY HAVE YOU STUCK A MIDGET ONTO MY FROZEN TRUNK? IT TICKLES SOMETHING AWFUL. I'VE GOT A GOOD MIND TO...
..SMOTHER HER!

Looks like we hit some nerves with Ish 26—in any case, we got lots of different opinions. Some liked it, some didn't; some thought I nailed the story, others thought I missed; some thought the story felt unreal, others thought it was very real (including a cop who's seen that kinda stuff); some think the "I was a victim" excuse is valid, and others think we have to take responsibility for our own actions regardless.

Here's what YOU had to say.

Dear Sam,

I just finished reading #26. My God. I can't...there ARE no words to express how I feel. There is no emotion that can even begin to describe anything for me right now. You are a GENIUS. And I know you're going to take my compliments in your usual ah-you-don't-really-mean-that-I'm-not-really-any-good-manner, but they're true.

I wasn't really ready to accept the new Sara, the new Maxx, the new Gone, the new EVERYTHING into my heart. Out of loyalty, I kept buying the comics. Today, I bought #26—and BOOM. Like a silent Hiroshima, my world exploded. Best of all were pages 16 and 17. You have proven that 32 tiny little pictures are worth 32,000 words—or 32,001, if you count the word in a box on the last one. But 32 million words could never quite explain what you said there. Silence is the harshest teacher. You brought up something in me that I didn't know was there.

Lindsay Lamfers
Vallejo, CA

Hey! Sam Kieth!

I am Artemis Pender. After reading your #26 ORIGIN of Gone, I was stunned at how you told my story. Although different in technical details, the emotional core of his experiences are a mirror image of mine.

Although abused as a boy, I never transferred the hate/anger/fear/shame to anyone else like Gone did with the women he killed, but the pathways to becoming the shell which he was are very familiar.

Even though Gone was originally cast as an antagonist, I feel closer to him because he suffered. No, what he did wasn't right, but he felt the same fear I did, the same shame. It was wrong, but the shame feeling I had (as did Gone) was placed there by a society which thinks men are too "tough" to be abused. They seem to forget an eight year old boy is as powerless against a grown man as a girl of the same age.

I'm not saying I can identify with women survivors—I can't, because the experiences are completely different (if equally wrong). One in three girls are abused by age 18, with boys at 18, it's one in six. Nobody should have to suffer that sh*t, and it is totally wrong for society to tell the hurting boys that they're "sissy," because only in silence can sexual abuse thrive.

And that's why I wrote—to thank you, not for the stunning art, dialogue or hilarious comedy relief points, but for shedding an unfearing light on the subject of male abuse. Not to dis what sh*t girls go through, but little boys out there need to know that it's not their fault, and they're not "sissies" and that it is very brave to cry out for help.

If any kid sees this letter and is being abused and being told not to tell because it's his fault—that's WRONG. Call your local abuse hotline—be brave and remember, you're NEVER alone.

Thank you very much, Sam,
Cade Swinger
So. Lake Tahoe, CA

P.S. My Maxx is a fuschia colored lemming.

Dear Sam Kieth,

I just finished reading the origin of Mr. Gone and I thought it was a horrible, uncreative story because almost anyone can write in full detail the amount of abuse they have received or someone they know has received.

I just expected more from you and your story. I know of stuff like that that happens where I live, and I read your comics and everyone else's to draw away from that. This story was ill, it sucked, I'm sorry but it did.

Sincerely,
Marcos Vigil
Trinidad, CO

P.S. This story just brought up horrible memories of how sick people are. I can't even begin to describe how much this story failed.

ETHAN GREENBAUM
High Springs, FL

Dear Sam,

August issue of The Maxx was very close to being the best adult/teen comic I have read in a very long time. As a police officer, I see many aspects of real life in your comic. Many are tragic but very real. I think you will find

this issue one of your better-selling issues, although all of them are very good.

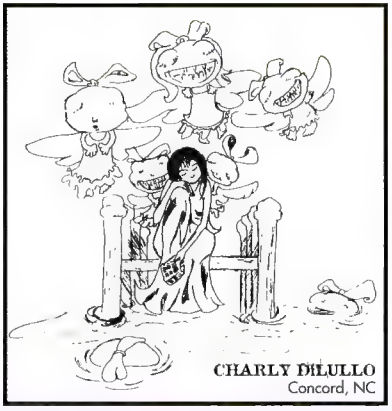
Name withheld because we lost it **SORRY!!!!!** (Write back & we'll credit you next ish.)

Dear The Maxx,

Wow, the recent issue with the Origin of Mr. Gone was really beautiful. I didn't expect you'd be able to do something I'd enjoy more than Friends of Maxx. You better be careful, or you'll start winning awards and making heaps of money.

Brian John Mitchell
Raleigh, NC

AH-you-don-t-mean-that-I'm-not-really-any-good.



Dear Sam,

I just wanted to say that Mr. Gone can make me wear his pink parka and bag anytime.

Bill McDonald
Ridgefield, WA

P.S. Thanks a heap for making the one gay character in your comic a child molester. **I've got nothing against bags and parkas for consenting adults.**

But you're right. Statistics that I've read show that most child molesters are not homosexual. I don't think of the sitter as gay, but that wasn't clear. My apologies.

Dear Mr. Kieth,

The Origin of Mr. Gone is good but in parts it seems fake. The emotional intensity or sincerity of some parts just drops out. It's hard to describe, but it is like you drop your effort or "make it up." OK, you "make it all up." But it seems like you ran out of the flow or something.

Ambrose Shen
Victoria, Australia

Hmmm...

Dear Sam,

After reading #26, I simply had to let you know that it could well be your best issue yet. Yes, it lacks the action and absurdities of some of your other issues. Sure, you made a lot of small panels and images, but you fit a hell of a lot into the book, both in visual terms as well as literary content.

Maybe I thought so much of the story because it struck kind of close to home; you see, I once had a male babysitter when I was very young who made me (?) masturbate him. I don't remember that much of it all but he didn't hurt me or force me to do anything; I guess it was just a powerful job of suggestion. It only happened once and it never was revealed; after that, I avoided that kid whenever possible and we all just went on with our lives.

At any rate, I found your handling of the elements in the story to be very realistic and believable and, at the same time, wandering into fantasy (with the Outback stuff and Gone blowing his head off/sewing it back on, etc.). Some people may not think that sexual perversions like the ones depicted in the story are all that prevalent but—it *does* happen, folks!

It's ironic that you show Sara fighting back tears at the end of the story; I did also. Not so much in any way relating to my own life—I simply felt so moved by the story of the characters in the book and the feelings you exposed. Mr. Gone suddenly becomes an understandable entity worthy of our pity and compassion.

Sincerely,
K.B.

Dear Mr. Kieth,

One afternoon I picked up The Maxx #26. "The Origin of Mr. Gone" proclaimed the cover! I was psyched, wanting some of that evil debonair I had been missing ever since Julie sliced his head off. You, my friend, are The Man.

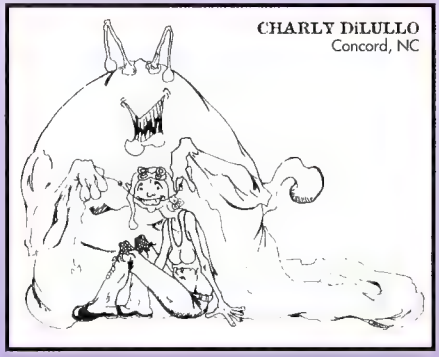
I bet you lost a lot of readers over this issue. I bet you'll get more than one irate letter. But I'm truly impressed. Not only did you have...well...the *balls* to attempt to depict such sensitive moments, but you did it very, very well.

I think that with #26 The Maxx has come full circle. Strange how the early life of the villain is more compelling than any of the protagonists. Perhaps that is because extreme childhoods are often necessary to compel individuals to become villains. Perhaps this is the "I was abused as a child and that's why I did it" defense, but I don't care. For better or worse our environment is a big part of who we are.

Sincerely,
Seth August Lombardi
Jefferson City, MO

To The Maxx,

After reading #26, a quote by the late great actor Brandon Lee popped in my head: "Victims...aren't we all..." At first I didn't understand what I was thinking about. Then it hit me like a brick from up high. We are all victims. Victims of circumstance. Reality's harsh little play things, if you will.



Then I started thinking about all the superheroes in comics today. They're all victims in some manner...but are never really presented as victims. For once a comic book "bad guy" appears as a victim.

In my mind, the only thing that separates Mr. Gone from the said superheroes is the way in which he coped with his victimization. He really didn't. Instead of actually coping and learning from it and using it to help himself and possibly others, he bottled it all up inside. Without dealing with it, he became what he truly hated most: a victimizer. By becoming a victimizer, he didn't solve his problems, he made them worse, not just for himself but for others. He made more victims, but, far worse, he possibly made

more victimizers.

Not just another victim,
Plord.
Washington, D.C.

KOSTJA KLEYE
Berlin, Germany

Dear Sam,

I think I've gotten an understanding of what is going on.

When Gone was in Australia (if he was at all), he never really met those Aborigines because they were in his OUTBACK! HE was in his Outback! That explains the amazing coincidence that all those children had lost their eyes like Phred!!! They were Gone's version of isz!! This also explains why Sara's isz look like fairies made of bubble gum with funny eyes (at least the funny eyes part. As for why they look like bubblegum, I can't say). When Sara started with her Outback, Gone must have been a part of it and so transferred his quilt and fear of hurting her like Phred was hurt!!! It is because of the dream he had of hurting her that way! IT'S ALL SO CLEAR NOW!! HA HA HA!!!

Anyway, I digress. Are you intending to make Gone a protagonist now? His story was so sad and horrifying that he could never hope to be the dark, ominous, mysterious villain he once was (which, in a weird way, sucks. He was up there with Darth Vader as villains go.) He can never be taken seriously again.

One last question: what was Gone's job during most of his life? Where did he work, I mean? If you say "postal worker" note that you will be bludgeoned with a big, red, plastic whiffle bat.

Peace, love and caribou!
Chris Curran
Toledo, OH

I don't remember, but wasn't even Darth Vader redeemed in the end?

Dear Sam and Maxxers at work,

I am writing this about #26. You are probably expecting a million letters for this one. Do you know feel like a god? What is the easiest way to say that that was the best ish yet? Here goes—*Issue 26 was the best Maxx issue yet!* In fact, I think it was one of the best issues by anyone yet. P-o-w-e-r-f-u-l. I mean, I have myself wondered where pain come from, and the cycle you have shown is one that evokes a feeling as powerful as a nightmare that one cannot wake up from and is found to be reality. Keep writing such stuff. You make feelings leap as much as you do the mind. Outback, here we go!!!

Gieve Patel
Reading, PA

ANTHOTHY INGRISANO

Dear Mr. Sam Kieth,

I am very impressed with your work. No other comic I've read has shown as much intelligence. I admire how you can capture the emotions of the characters. The emotions and thoughts are so real. I've been brought to tears because of the things Sara has felt and experienced. I relate to her so much. Another thing that is very cool is that all the people in your comic actually look like real people. Other comic book characters are either superheroes with protruding steroid-induced muscles, or anorexic-looking bimbos with humongous breasts. Very unrealistic.

I just finished reading #26, and all of the emotions of Mr. Gone are very realisitic.
This issue impressed me a lot.
Keep up the great work.

Jennifer Ward
Lakewood, CO

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I just put down #26 and had to dry my eyes. As "weak" as some may think it is for a man to cry, it is actually one of the strongest and powerful expressions of emotions a person can experience. I am a 19-year-old young man and proud to admit that this story was probably the most true-to-life, heart-wrenching, and though-provoking (I love hyphens!) one in the "big company" comic industry. It actually made me question my belief about how people use the "I was abused as a child and that's why I did it" defense. The way you protrayed the truly tormented life of Mr. Gone has to make anyone go "Damn, maybe they're not all lying, maybe some really can't help it." Your use of imagery when Mr. Gone bends down in a submissive position to his Aunt Ruth, Celia, Tilly, and finally to Aunt Ruth's grave was an incredibly nice touch to show dependence and what-not. I could go on and on, but the only thing that needs to be said is "Great job on a truly provocative, risky, and completely original masterpiece."

Your devoted fan and friend,
Ryon Collins
Martinez, GA

On the other hand...

Dear Sam,

I am pleased you did not allow Gone to fall too deeply into "I was a victim and that's why I'm a predator" excuse that seems common among some sexual predators. I still believe we have choices as to what we make of our lives, regardless of whether we are victimized by society, family, etc. or not.

Gone also made amends with his victims, which is something you almost never see in reality. I find that highly commendable of a character that has progressed so far from being a villain. In many ways, I suspect that Gone has undergone the greatest transformation of any of the characters in your book.

I also want to say that I like the villainous slug for one reason in particular. Everthing he says sounds like it comes out of a daily meditations book. I personally cannot stand those kind of books. They all deal with feeling good, and not with

one of the more important lessons: doing good. Iago is a perfect archetype villain of our time—the self-help monster.

John Merck
Gainesville, GA

Dear Sam,

Issue #27 was something else. I couldn't help but get worked up and misty-eyed over seeing such disparate characters as Sara, Artie P., Mark Winters, the old Maxx and the new Maxx come together as a unified team. I mean this must have been (sniff, sniff) what it was like when the Superfriends first got together. Oh God! I can hold back the tears of nostalgia no longer! Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo!

Sincerely,
Brian Jordan
Oakland, CA

U hali gani Sam,

I've come to realize something, Sam. After 26 issues, I finally figured it out. It's all Artie's fault. EVERYTHING started with him. This story isn't about Maxx or any of the others. Issue 26 finalized my conclusions.

Now I have some comments about #26. You are one sick monkey!!! Artie had a demented life (which only you could dream up), but it seemed so real...

You've got guts putting what you did into #26. You might get a lot of letters about that one. I respect that.

Gracias,
Brian Windsor
St. Charles, IL

KEVIN BRENNAN
Calgary, AB

P.S. You should fill that big blank space on the inside cover. May I suggest what McFarlane does with Spawn? He puts a summary of the last issue there (a month is a long time to remember that).

I would, if I could remember what happened last issue...

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I really liked #26. It almost made me cry to see how abused Mr. Gone was. I got one question though: why wasn't Julie (remember her?) dressed in a parka and a bag?

Sincerely,
Keith Chilton

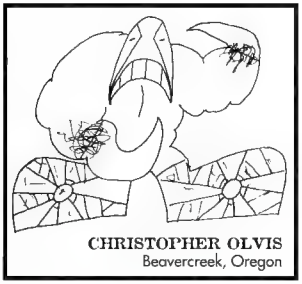
Yeah—wish I'd thought of it, those umptee-nine issues ago.

Dear Sam,

If I recall correctly, about ten years ago Mr. Gone was a small piece of goop on Julie's ceiling. How the hell does somebody recover from something like that? I'm just plain confused.

A loyal Maxxhead,
Mark Baum
Anchorage, AK

Dear J.P. Confused: OKOK I forgot to draw this. An Is snuck in, stole Gone's head, and stuck it back on.



CHRISTOPHER OLVIS
Beavercreek, Oregon

Dear Sam,

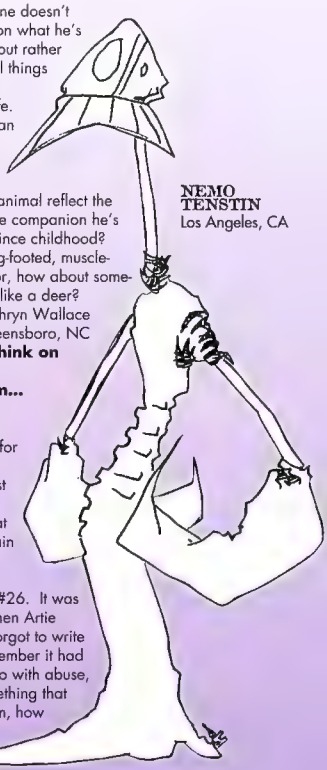
I think, years after I started collecting The Maxx, I'm finally starting to understand it **[Oh sh*t]**. I love what you're doing with Gone, great stuff.

Your follower,
Robert Syrett
Menlo Park, CA

Dear Sam,

Charlie Barr's letter in #26 had a good point: both Julie's and Sara's Maxxes represent something important missing in their lives. And this brings up the question, "What is Mr. Gone's Maxx?" Why, when he learned from the Aborigines to "walk in Dreamtime" did he enter somebody else's Outback and never his own?

From what I picked up in this issue (which was frightening and grim and one of the best stories I've read in a while), Mr. Gone doesn't seem to focus on what he's been missing, but rather on all the awful things that have been added to his life. Would this mean his Outback has a sort of anti-Maxx, or does his spirit animal reflect the perfect feminine companion he's been missing since childhood? Instead of a big-footed, muscle-bound protector, how about something delicate, like a deer?



NEMO TENSTIN
Los Angeles, CA

Kathryn Wallace
Greensboro, NC

I'll have to think on that. A deer...hmmm...

Dear Sam,

Thank you for writing a real story. You must write the only comic book that I look over again to analyze the story.

I just read #26. It was so sad. But when Artie says "...but I forgot to write it down. I remember it had something to do with abuse, though." Something that traumatic to him, how could it

not be branded into his memory???

Also, when I saw Phred with his eyes sewn shut, I automatically thought of the exploding fairies. But the fairies are from Sara's Outback, so how could she know about Phred?

TTFN,
Greg Hom
Fremont, CA

Read on.

Dearest
Sam Kieth,

Issue 26 is beautiful! Holy sh*t!! This is what

KENNY GRAHAM Concord, NC

you will be remembered for...

OK, enough praise. Now I'm gonna ask some questions which have either already been answered whilst I was taking a bath, or they don't even warrant an answer 'cause I'm diggin' too damn deep.

(1) Will we ever find out about those silly CIA boys? Yes, Artie turned 'em into bugs and went fishin', but how? Or is that simply irrelevant?

(2) Does Norbert use the seed-bringer mask and claws (as well as the title "The Maxx") only because that's what Sara will react to and identify with ('cause of Dave/Maxx)? I mean, in order to get her to believe in the whole slug problem? Or is that just standard Maxx/spirit animal wear?

(3) 'Way back in #20, we see baby Iago fall into Gone's self-help tapes, and Iago always seems concerned with hugs and helping people out. What does this mean, huh? Is this representative of Gone or Sara, or both?

(4) Gone's (er, Pender's) Outback has something to do with all those poor Phreds, eh (in 26)? (Say, is that a digeridoo? **[Of course.]**) If this is so, where, exactly is the line seperating everyone's reality from their own respective subconscious? Has Gone ever <u>really</u> been magical, or was it some sort of joint-perception among Julie, Sara and Dave? Is that why Gone calls everyone's subconscious the Outback, because that's where his really is (i.e. Australia)?

(5) Sara seems to remember something about fairies. ("Wet fairies good, dry fairies bad...) These are obviously just like Julie's Isz, which were, what, her subconscious fear/desires/hates/etc.? Her emotions! So what does water and keeping these fears moist mean? (Sara has a "heavy heart"—the fairies must also represent some kind of regrets she harbors against people...like Julie!)

(6) Iago's list: is this really Sara's sh*tlist? Since Iago came from her Outback (although wasn't it really Julie's—Damn! Now I've gone and confused myself! **[It was Sara's that Iago came from]),** doesn't it mean that these people have somehow caused Sara some kind of regret/desire/fear/etc.??? Huh? But why and/or how is something from Sara's Outback killing these people and feeding them to her own exploding fairies, her emotions? (And what could Vincent Vega have possibly done to piss her off???)

(Back on that whole fairy thing: "cutting them open," dealing with one's bad feelings/thoughts is better than "letting them all explode," getting to a point where you can no longer deal with them. Pretty good, eh?)

Anyways, this is the only comic I've ever read and it just kicks ass all over this stink joint. Say, how 'bout comin' over for dinner? Mom's makin' chicken and Stovetop!

Your pal,
Patrick D. Mullen
Granite City, IL

Your questions are better than any answers I could provide.

Maxx loves Stovetop. It tastes like toast left out in the rain. For those of you who missed it, this dude proposed to his lady in the Personals section of Head to Head #25.

Dear Mr. Kieth,

YESS!!! SHE SAID YES...AND YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE LOOK ON HER FACE WHEN SHE GOT TO THE PART: "WILL YOU MARRY ME?"

Even if Maxx should come to an end one day, the memory of Maxx and his creator will live on through the hearts and minds of Suzette and Rudi du Plooy.

Rudi du Plooy
South Africa

Shucks.

Dear Mr. Kieth (You devil),

Please, please don't tell me you're going to stop at #30!!

True Maxxhead,
Baptiste Stowell
Astoria, NY

OK, I won't. And I'm serious.

One more letter about #26 before we move on:

Sam Kieth,

I have been a Maxx fan since the beginning, and I

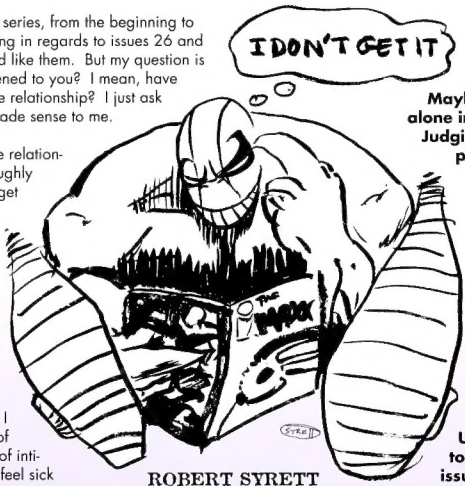
have always loved the series, from the beginning to the present. I am writing in regards to issues 26 and 27. Don't worry—I did like them. But my question is to you: has this happened to you? I mean, have you been in an abusive relationship? I just ask for the reason that it made sense to me. Too much sense.

I was in an abusive relationship for a year and roughly eight months. I won't get into the details, except to say I have never been through more pain in my life, physically and mentally. It's just that you talked of watching patterns, staring at the ceiling and walls, anything, just so not to focus on what was happening (the pain). I also know the feeling of sickness. The thought of intimacy would make me feel sick to my stomach—I could hardly even bear the thought of kissing her.

She has been out of my life for almost two years now, but the pain still resides. I guess what I really wanted to know is that I was not alone. So if you can respond either to me, or in the letter section, even if it is just a "yes" or a "no," I would be truly grateful.

Thank you for your time, all the great comics, and a little hope.

Sincerely,
Little Raven

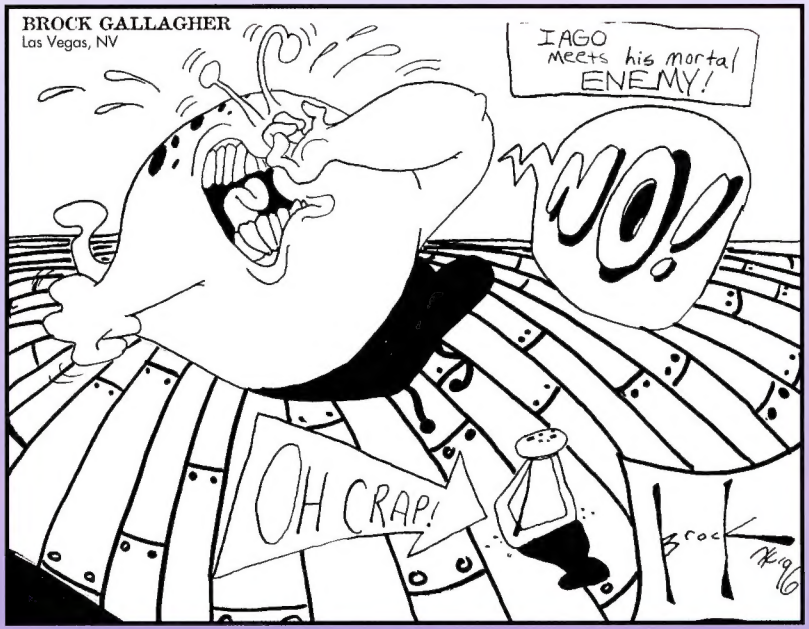


ROBERT SYRETT
Menlo Park, CA

Did it happen to me? No. Does that make my story less valid? Maybe... Are you alone in your feelings? Judging from all the people who wrote in to say they understood, I'd say no. Hang in. At the risk of sounding like Iago, "We hear you."

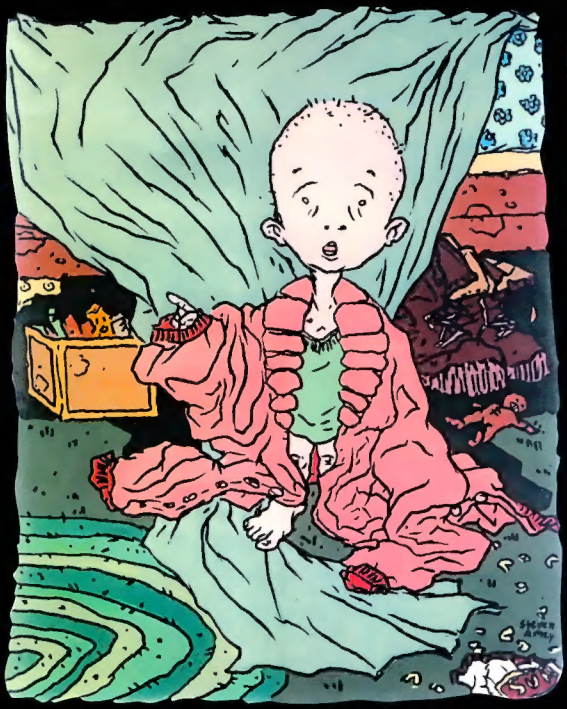
PS/HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS WE GET ASKED ALL THE TIME: No subscriptions or retail sales available/sorry. Use "Head to Head" to find back issues/fan clubs/whatever (use the address in the indicia)/postcards are cheap and easy like us/WRITE LEGIBLY. No we don't print all the letters or art we get/too many/yes SAM DOES read them ALL/you might get answered or printed or edited/you might not/life's funny that way. B&w art has better chance of being published than color/can't return artwork/sorry. Keep 'em coming/the better the letters and submissions, the better the book! Oh yeah.

BROCK GALLAGHER
Las Vegas, NV

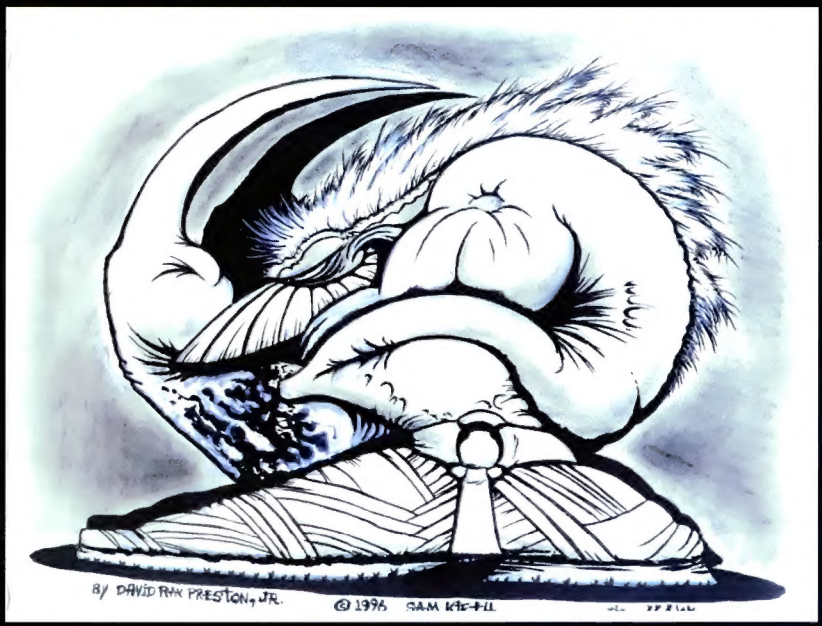


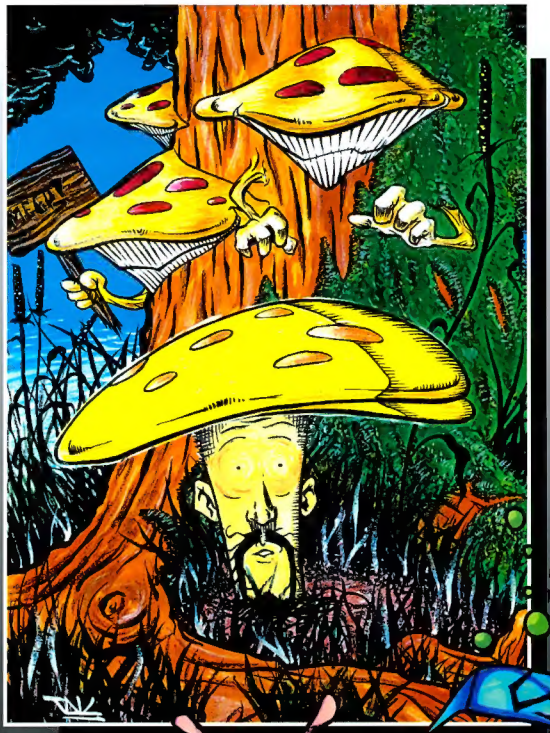
CRAIG CHEAPÉ

STEVEN AMEY
Walnut Port, PA



DAVID RAY PRESTON Jr.





TAK TOYOSHIMA
Boston,MA

R.M. SANCHEZ
Columbia, TN